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President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 36 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/470, A/57/621)

Draft resolutions (A/57/L.44, A/57/L.45)

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): It is a matter of profound regret and concern to my delegation that, after 32 years of its consideration by this Assembly, this item — "The situation in the Middle East" — continues to be debated without a solution in sight. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories remains volatile, with the violence threatening to spiral out of control. The outcomes of the conflict have been devastating, with death and destruction affecting both peoples, particularly the Palestinians. The toll in terms of casualties has been staggeringly high and well documented. What is worse is the deepening chasm of mistrust and antipathy between Palestinians and Israelis at all levels during the current intifada, which, if not bridged as soon as possible, threatens to erupt into a full-scale conflict between the two sides, with grave repercussions for regional peace and security.

The highly unstable situation in the region is aggravated by the current preoccupation with Iraq and the preparations in some quarters for military action against that country, which will open a new and dangerous dimension in an already complex and complicated situation in the Middle East.

At the core of this regional tension remains the continued occupation by Israel of Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif or East Jerusalem. We are all too familiar with the details of the conflict, of the violence and hostilities it has generated over the decades and of its impact on Palestinians and Israelis alike. The consequences for the Palestinians have been particularly debilitating and tragic. They involve the blatant and persistent violation of their human rights, characterized by arbitrary arrests and detentions, ill treatment and torture of prisoners, exile or banishment, extrajudicial killings of targeted individuals, economic and social deprivations, the demolition of houses, seizures, blockades and curfews, the destruction of farmlands and infrastructures, severe restrictions of water use and other forms of unjustified collective punishment.

The extent of the inhumane treatment of Palestinians living under the occupation has been well documented in United Nations and other independent reports and recounted by the Palestinian delegation and other concerned delegations in this Assembly and the Security Council. The net effect of Israeli occupation policies and practices has been one of tremendous political, economic and social suffering and hardship

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for the population, including the loss of human lives. The tragedy is that these details of the dire plight of the Palestinian people living under occupation have been recounted so many times in this Assembly, the Security Council and elsewhere that they have ceased to shock us. They have become a routine feature of life under occupation. Unfortunately for the victims, they will continue to bear the burden of the harsh treatment meted out against them without any hope of early redress.

In the meantime, President Yasser Arafat, their democratically leader, continues to be demonized, harassed and intimidated at every turn and accused of being ineffective and ineffectual when every facet of his authority has been systematically undermined. Subjected to all forms of humiliation, he remains a virtual prisoner in his own country, unable to travel abroad out of fear of being permanently barred from returning home. The peace process is in tatters and the spirit of Oslo and Madrid, which had given so much hope for the future, is practically dead among many Israelis.

The current deplorable situation and the oppression of the Palestinians cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely. It must be brought to an immediate end lest the situation spiral out of control, with grave repercussions on regional and international peace and security. Malaysia continues to believe in the urgent need for an interposing United Nations or international force, an idea that enjoys wide support, including from the Secretary-General. Only such a presence would be able to calm the situation and help rebuild the confidence and trust that have been so badly shattered during these past two years of violence. At the political/diplomatic level, every encouragement and support must be given to the efforts of the Quartet, as well as to the Arab peace initiative adopted in Beirut in March this year. We would urge the parties involved to press on with their extremely challenging tasks.

We look forward to the finalization of the road map so that a comprehensive settlement can be achieved and the two-State goal set forth by Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) realized.

Malaysia is equally concerned about the situation of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. We deplore the fact that the Arabs of the Syrian Golan continue to suffer under the occupation. Like their Palestinian brethren, they experience many deprivations, such as work restrictions, limited access to education, and many other forms of humiliation and indignities that characterize life under occupation. We consider the existence — indeed, the further expansion — of Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan as a gross violation of article 49 (6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which categorically prohibits an occupying Power from transferring parts of its own population into the territory it occupies.

The settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan remain a major obstacle to the resumption of the Syrian-Israeli peace process, which has been suspended since 1996. We urge Israel to demonstrate the sincerity of its professed desire for peace by taking concrete and serious steps to comply with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied in 1967. The stalemate and the lack of dialogue between the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel aimed at implementing those resolutions, based on the principle of land for peace, are a cause for serious concern and constitute an additional negative element in the already volatile Middle East situation. The repeated renewals of the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) for 28 years is indicative of the tense environment between the two sides.

With regard to Lebanon, while there has been some progress in the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) following Israeli's withdrawal from south Lebanon on 16 June 2000, we believe that the situation in the area remains volatile and is closely linked with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Breaches of the Blue Line raise the possibility of a full-scale conflict along the frontier that could easily flare up into a serious confrontation, drawing in several parties. Repeated Israeli violations of the Blue Line and of Lebanese airspace, which are met with retaliatory anti-aircraft fire from the Lebanese side, pose serious risks of a further deterioration of the situation. It is imperative that Israel fully respect the Blue Line and refrain from further violations.

In his briefing to the Security Council on 12 November, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs drew attention to the fact that the Wazzani Springs water project was also a source of tension along the Blue Line and that diplomatic efforts were being undertaken to defuse the tension. We welcome such efforts and hope that a diplomatic resolution of the matter can be achieved. Similarly, we encourage

the parties to resolve outstanding issues following the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and the establishment of the Blue Line through constructive dialogue. We welcome the full reinstatement of the effective authority of the Lebanese Government in south Lebanon, which will contribute to further progress in the discharge of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Given the unsettled and precarious situation in the Middle East, my delegation is particularly concerned at the widely reported preparations for war against Iraq, even as the weapons inspectors are resuming their work, and given that Mr. Hans Blix, the head of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), has yet to submit his findings to the Security Council, which, by virtue of resolution 1441 (2002), is the final authority in terms of deciding on the appropriate next steps to deal with any development arising out of the inspection.

Prejudging the report to be submitted by UNMOVIC would seriously undermine the authority and credibility of the Security Council and of the United Nations as a whole. We believe that the international community must quickly address the current precarious and potentially explosive situation in the region and undertake every effort to de-escalate tension by focusing on efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and allowing UNMOVIC to carry out its mandate under resolution 1441 (2002), rather than making preparations for war against Iraq. Such a war would have serious implications for the international situation, particularly as concerns global efforts to combat terrorism, which would be seriously impaired. It would widen the gap and deepen the differences between the Muslim world and the West and could swell the ranks of the discontented in the Muslim world, especially when the oppression of the Palestinian people continues to be ignored by the international community. It would give extremist elements powerful ammunition and a convenient excuse to mobilize support for their militant cause. It would indeed be tragic for the region if the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, one of the most intractable conflicts in the world, were to be sidelined in pursuit of some short-term political objectives vis-à-vis Iraq.

Given the unsettled situation in the Middle East, my delegation remains committed to encouraging peaceful solutions to the multifaceted and complex problems faced by the region. We urge the parties concerned to seek a just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict based on all relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 1397 (2002); the Madrid terms of reference; the principle of land for peace; and the implementation of all existing agreements between the parties towards a comprehensive peace in the Middle East on all tracks, including the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks. We urge Israel, in its own best interests, to look beyond its immediate security needs — important though they are — and to begin in earnest to engage its Arab neighbours in serious and meaningful dialogues towards the early realization of such a comprehensive peace.

Mr. Nambiar (India): It has been over 11 years since the Middle East peace process began in Madrid. The peace process envisioned direct negotiations between Israel and the Arab States on the one hand and between Israel and the Palestinians on the other, to be conducted on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), based on the principle of land for peace.

A number of positive developments have followed. These include the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of President Arafat; diplomatic relations between Israel and several others, including some Arab countries; and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon.

Unfortunately, however, the last two years have represented, in large measure, a negation of the progress achieved since Madrid. In every sense, the region has witnessed regression from the modest success that had been achieved painstakingly over almost a decade. The impasse in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and the resultant frustration, mistrust and violence have led to a dismantling of the multiple mechanisms established to increase cooperation and harmony between the two sides. Over 1,800 Palestinians and 600 Israelis have lost their lives in this short period of time. Despite the best efforts of the protagonists and of other interested parties, the situation in the Middle East has continued to deteriorate.

It is important for the General Assembly to reflect upon the reasons why we have reached this precarious juncture today. It is important for us to take stock of

where we stand on the complex issue involving Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel has failed to understand the limitations of a unidimensional policy based on a military approach without recourse to a concomitant political approach. Its policy of military blockades, curfews and restrictions imposed on Palestinian areas have resulted in economic deprivation, the disruption of normal life, loss of freedom and, most importantly, the demoralization of the Palestinian population. This has resulted in continuing acts of violence and retribution against Israeli forces and civilians.

As a number of United Nations studies have established, the closures in the Palestinian areas have given rise to a grave humanitarian situation that continues to deteriorate. We note that the United Nations has recently announced a humanitarian plan of action prepared on the basis of a report by the Secretary-General's Personal Humanitarian Envoy, who visited the region in August 2002. The United Nations bears a major responsibility to provide economic relief and sustenance to the beleaguered Palestinian population. While acknowledging the contribution of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, we urge them to continue to do all that is necessary in this regard.

As in the past, India reiterates its call to Israel to take immediate steps to lift the closures and blockades and to ease the economic hardship of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Israel must freeze its settlement expansion activity as the first step in the gradual dismantling of settlements in the West Bank and in Gaza. That would be an important confidence-building measure.

At the same time, the almost incessant instances of terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians, resulting in the heavy loss of innocent life, have to end. India has consistently called for an immediate cessation of violence, whether on account of military action or acts of terror against innocent and unarmed civilians. India believes that all acts of violence and terrorism have to be abjured in absolute terms. There can be no moral justification for terrorism on any grounds, whether political, ideological, religious or any other.

The continuing deterioration of the situation and the ongoing cycle of violence highlight the need for a political solution. Preoccupation with elections, both in Israel and within the Palestinian Authority, is not sufficient reason to lose the momentum for developing a political framework for peace. The Secretary-General recently stated that the road map for achieving a two-State solution within a three-year time frame being developed by the Quartet can play a vital role in breaking the cycle of violence and promoting a peaceful settlement.

India supports the efforts by the Quartet and initiatives such as that of Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdullah adopted by the Arab League Summit in Beirut in March 2002, in resolving this outstanding issue. We share the view of many others that the conflict can be resolved only through negotiations. We call upon all sides to desist from violence, as demanded in the recently adopted Security Council resolution 1435 (2002).

India believes in the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and peaceful borders, as affirmed by Security Council resolution 1397 (2002). We hope that day will not be too long in coming.

Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000 in conformity with resolution 425 (1978) has, unfortunately, not resulted in the hoped-for lasting peace and tranquillity in the area. Regular transgressions of the Blue Line are provocations that need to be addressed by the sides concerned. We believe that the presence of the highly professional United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has contributed greatly to minimizing incidents along that border. In this context, we wish to commend UNIFIL for its stellar performance in the face of adversity and challenge.

The current disruptions evident in the Palestinian peace process have had an adverse impact on the Syrian track of negotiations as well. We are hopeful that the circumstances for the resumption of negotiations on the issue of the return of the Syrian Golan will arise in the near future, leading to a comprehensive settlement of all issues in the Middle East.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): Day in and day out, the situation in the Middle East painfully pricks the human conscience, as the vortex of violence mercilessly swallows innocent men, women and children. Two peoples of a rich civilization and heritage are at loggerheads, spilling blood and inflicting misery for too long.

In the second intifada alone, more than 2,000 lives have been lost. The toll has been high on both sides, but higher on the Palestinian side. The Palestinian economy and infrastructure have been totally ruined. Our heart goes out to those men, women and children who have lost their near and dear ones in Palestine and in Israel and who have become victims of the cruel fate that continues to cast a dark shadow on the Middle East.

Nepal strongly condemns terrorism and supports action against it. It also denounces violence against innocent civilians, be it perpetrated by a State or by extremists. These atrocities must cease in order for the healing process to begin and for peace and amity to prevail in the region.

We all know that there is no shortcut to peace in the Middle East. Neither is there a military solution to the complex problem besetting the region. Undoubtedly, Israel has the right to exist and to live in peace within its borders. Equally legitimate is the right of the Palestinians to have their own independent and viable State. Both sides will have to learn to find a way to live together. For this, both sides will have to make painful compromises. They will have to give space to each other on the small piece of land that has the pride of being the fountain of three major world civilizations, all of which teach love, compassion and peace. We must bring those eternal values to bear on our quest for comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Attacks against the Palestinian leadership, the occupation of Palestinian territories and the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza will not ensure peace for Israel. Neither will punishing the entire Palestinian society for the crimes of a few extremists win glory or goodwill for the Israeli Government. Those measures only foment hostilities among the Palestinians. Therefore, Israel must lift its siege on the Palestinian territories and withdraw from the occupied and reoccupied areas. It must stop using excessive force against Palestinian civilians. It must freeze the construction of new settlements in Palestinian territory and dismantle the ones that have already been built. It must also immediately open political negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, without preconditions, thereby giving hope to the Palestinian people for a State sooner rather than later.

In the same vein, attacks against Israeli civilians will only hurt the Palestinian cause by strengthening the hand of the conservatives and alienating the moderates in Israel who could help to advance the two-State formula proposed by the Quartet and other actors.

The Palestinian Authority must curb the extremist elements and the global community must help it to do so. It requires assistance if it is to revive the economy, create jobs for young people and resuscitate its security and physical infrastructure. More importantly, it requires a clear proposal for a viable Palestinian State within a feasible time frame. Without such light at the end of the tunnel, the Palestinian population will remain susceptible to the destructive designs of the extremist elements.

In this context, Nepal supports the Quartet agreement arrived at early this year, the Saudi proposal and all relevant Security Council resolutions that provide a useful framework for a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Destiny has brought the Palestinians and Israelis together. No matter what, they will have to live in the Middle East with each other; better that they care for each other than that they kill each other. Efforts must therefore be exerted to prevent a further poisoning of the atmosphere and to warm relations between the two peoples.

No progress will be possible until the Israelis and Palestinians themselves display greater resilience and commitment to finding a durable peace. The global community must do more — and do it urgently — to deal seriously with the peace and security that has eluded the region for so long, by promoting broader peace in the region, embracing the Lebanese and Syrian fronts, as well.

Both Israelis and Palestinians should be able to send their children to school without fear. They should be able to coexist in peace and harmony. And they should be able to pursue their own way of life in freedom and dignity.

Mr. Negroponte (United States of America): The United States remains firmly committed to achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The recent upsurge in violence in the region is deeply troubling to us. We have repeatedly urged both sides to take immediate steps to ease the situation and refrain from words and actions that inflame tensions and complicate efforts to find peaceful solutions that allow the peoples of the region to live in peace, security and dignity.

The goal of the United States is to end all violence and terror in the region and to lay out a path to end the occupation that began in 1967. In working towards this goal, the United States is closely engaged with the Israelis and Palestinians, regional leaders, our Quartet partners and the International Task Force on Palestinian Reform. We believe that a negotiated final settlement can be accomplished in three years.

The centrepiece of our current efforts is a road map designed to help promote practical efforts to achieve four objectives. These are, first, to implement the strategy of promoting Palestinian institutional and security reform; secondly, to ease the humanitarian situation inside Palestinian areas; thirdly, to end violence and terror and restore security cooperation; and fourthly, to restore a political dialogue that would realize President Bush's vision of a final settlement based on two States living side by side in peace and security. The road map we are discussing will clearly lay out obligations and responsibilities on all sides. Progress from one phase to another would be performance-based.

This strategy and the road map are based on relevant Security Council resolutions, President Bush's speech of 24 June and the Arab League Beirut Summit initiative. They also seek to incorporate the Madrid terms of reference and previous agreements between the parties. The approach is aimed at a comprehensive peace with security for all States of the region, as called for in the Beirut Summit Declaration.

We would welcome a draft resolution under this agenda item that reflected a balanced and pragmatic approach consistent with that of the Quartet. Unfortunately, it appears that we will be considering texts that put this body in the position of attempting to prejudge the settlement of the question of Jerusalem and other final-status issues. To achieve a lasting peace, these issues must be decided through negotiations between the parties, consistent with their past agreements and with relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Blazey (Australia): I should like at the outset to register my country's deepest condolences to the Governments and the peoples of Kenya and of Israel for the deplorable attacks in Mombasa last week. The spectre of terrorism hangs heavy for Australians, who are still mourning the victims of the Bali bombings on 12 October this year, in which many innocent Australians, Indonesians and other nationals lost their lives. No member of the international community can any longer feel immune from threats to their security. None of us has any choice but to pursue the fight against terrorists and their networks.

In its statement last year, Australia expressed its deep frustration over the stalled Middle East peace process and Iraq's failure to cooperate with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission to achieve full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions. While we welcome the beginning of inspections in Iraq, developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have reinforced our concerns about the Middle East peace process. We must act to stop the situation from deteriorating further.

In the open Security Council debate on Iraq in October, Australia, with others, called on the members of the Security Council to adopt a new and robust resolution which would provide the strongest possible basis for unconditional and unfettered weapons inspections. Resolution 1441 (2002) does just that. It sets out a process by which the disarming of Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction can proceed peacefully. Australia has confidence in that process and supports it wholeheartedly. We welcome Iraq's decision to accept the United Nations inspectors, although this decision must be tested on the ground.

We look to the Government of Iraq to make a full declaration of its weapons of mass destruction holdings, to give United Nations inspectors full access and to provide for continuing monitoring and verification to prove that it has given up these weapons permanently. The Government of Iraq can and must do all these things and thus resolve the situation peacefully. For the sake of the Iraqi people, we hope that it will.

Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), which Australia strongly supported, affirmed a vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders.

Australia is committed to this vision and to a negotiated settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the principle of land for peace. We have repeatedly urged the parties to return to the negotiating table. Australia supports wholeheartedly Israel's territorial integrity and its right to live in peace.

We continue to recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. We see a Palestinian State as an inevitable part of a peaceful settlement. My Government has said that it would be generous in its support for a new Palestinian State.

In 2002-2003, Australia will provide an estimated $11.9 million in development assistance to the Middle East. Most of our assistance programme is focused on the Palestinian territories and on Palestinian refugees. As a significant contributor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), we are deeply concerned at the fatal shooting of Mr. Ian Hook, an employee of UNRWA, during an Israeli army raid on the Jenin refugee camp.

It is disappointing and distressing to see the continuation of senseless violence and destruction. We have said repeatedly that the deplorable targeting of innocent Israeli civilians by Palestinian suicide bombers are abhorrent and do the Palestinian cause no good. We urge Israel to act in a way which avoids disproportionate or reckless use of force, resulting in the killing of innocent civilians, and which risks encouraging the most violent of extremist groups while antagonizing those Palestinians who are ready to live side by side with Israel in their own State.

Despite the present discouraging situation, we look forward to the release of the road map to peace devised by the Quartet. We hope that it will be given a chance to work. In the meantime, neither side should make the mistake of alienating through violence those who are willing and ready to negotiate a settlement Both sides must beware of dashing hopes of peace by killing innocents.

Australia has a substantial and multifaceted relationship with the countries of the Middle East. We enjoy an expanding network of connections through trade — which has been growing rapidly — as well as through tourism, education and culture. We also have a large and vibrant community of Arab descent in Australia, which is part of the great diversity of cultures in our country. Australia has an important stake in the future of the Middle East region, and we will do what we can to contribute to its peace, security and prosperity.

In closing, I would like to make mention of the recent passing of Abba Eban, a pioneer of Israel's diplomacy and a distinguished statesman who spearheaded Israel's campaign for recognition in the United Nations and who represented Israel in this forum. His observation that "History teaches us that men behave wisely once they have exhausted all other alternatives" seems apt today. I am sure that, if he were here, he would join us in the hope that we would act with wisdom well before having reached that point.

Mr. Zackheos (Cyprus): Cyprus has aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union by the representative of Denmark.

There is no doubt that no other conflict has generated more concern and emotion internationally than the one in the Middle East. Cyprus has repeatedly and consistently expressed sorrow and concern at the collapse of the peace process and at the escalation of violence and the loss of so many lives, which has continued unabated for the past two years. The current situation clearly demonstrates once again the grave consequences of the long delay in finding a solution to the Palestinian problem.

All interested parties and the international community at large should consider with the utmost seriousness and urgency the tragic daily reality of this conflict, which exacerbates the plight of the Palestinians and affects the lives of millions of innocent people on a daily basis. We urge once again maximum restraint, since it has been demonstrated that resort to violence not only fails to produce any tangible benefits, but, on the contrary, aggravates an already tense situation.

In this context, I would like, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Cyprus, strongly to condemn the terrorist attack that took place in Kenya on 28 November, as well as the preceding attacks in Hebron and Jerusalem. We are particularly pained by the tragic loss of life and wounding of innocent victims, especially children, and we feel the grief of every mother, whether Israeli or Arab.

Time and again, Cyprus has indicated that it shares the view that the Palestinian issue constitutes the core of the Middle East conflict. My country has also called for a comprehensive and lasting solution to the Middle East problem, including on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). We reiterate our long-held position on the inadmissibility of foreign occupation and the acquisition of territory by war, and we declare our

support for the right of every State in the region, including Israel, to live in peace and security.

We believe that the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilians in Time of War should be fully respected. In our view, solutions to international conflicts must safeguard the basic tenets of justice and international legality, and maintain and restore the dignity of individuals. We believe that peace efforts and initiatives for the achievement of peace and stability should be based on international law. It is important that solutions to regional problems be perceived as fair, and accepted as such, by the populations concerned.

Prolonged occupation brings frustration, which can lead to acts of desperation. The Palestinian people must be able to look forward to the prospect of an early end to their unacceptable situation. In this context, we reiterate our support for the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the creation of their own State, whose realization is long overdue. We fully support the vision of Israeli and Palestinian States, living side by side, within recognized borders, in peace and security.

We call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from reoccupied areas, the lifting of the severe restrictions imposed on the Palestinian population; the lifting of the blockade on the occupied territories; ensuring the safety of humanitarian personnel; and putting an end to extrajudicial killings. Due to our own experience of the negative effects of settlements, which are illegal under international law and an impediment to the achievement of peace, we reiterate our opposition to this kind of activity and call for its cessation and reversal.

While speaking about the situation in Cyprus, we have on various occasions expressed our view that the policy of illegal settlements can neither be condoned nor accepted and its effects or objectives cannot be legalized ex post facto.

We welcome the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted last March at the Beirut Summit of the League of Arab States. We also strongly support all international efforts, including those of the Middle East Quartet, and the creation of a road map, outlining the steps towards Palestinian statehood.

We share the view that the inability of the international community to put an end to the unacceptable situation in the Middle East undermines the credibility of the system of collective security. The world community should break its silence. It should call upon both sides to return to the negotiating table and find a just and viable settlement. No excuse should be used for maintaining the present unacceptable situation or for intensifying the conflict. The Israelis deserve security while the Palestinians deserve the recognition of their inalienable rights.

I would like to reaffirm the readiness of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus to assist in any way deemed appropriate by the parties, including by hosting meetings. Our constructive role in the region, based on the traditional relations with all parties involved in the conflict, has been demonstrated in practice on many occasions. Our assistance in breaking the impasse in the Church of Nativity is a recent example.

We have no doubt that a solution to the Middle East conflict will lead to a greater sense of safety and justice at both the regional and the international level. We also realize that without such a settlement any prospect of regional economic cooperation is almost utopian.

We believe that the forces of moderation should be strengthened and the extremists from all sides should be isolated. Only in this way will we manage to revive the hope of the vast majority of the peoples of our region for the establishment of a permanent peace and realize the vision of a new Middle East on which so many hopes and expectations were generated in the 1990s.

Mr. Diab (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At a time when foreign occupation has receded from all parts of the earth, the General Assembly meets once again to discuss the agenda item on the situation in the Middle East. That situation is reflected in Israel's continued occupation of Arab territories in Palestine and Syria, in addition to the Sheb'a farms in Lebanon.

When we talk about the Arab-Israeli conflict, we must remember its historical causes so that we can justly assess the present period, which is the most important in that history.

The establishment of the League of Nations in 1919 was an important milestone for lands that were subject to colonialism in the Middle East. The principle of the right of people to self-determination, which was

established by United States President Woodrow Wilson in this period, was a landmark in the history of liberation from colonialism, because it emphasized the importance of non-discrimination among peoples. It also stressed equality between the interests of people and their right to establish their own independent State.

Despite the fact that these rights were endorsed by the League of Nations, they were denied to the Palestinian people because of the infringement of the Balfour Declaration upon their legitimate rights. History mentions the recognition by the League of Nations of the gradual independence of the Arab States that were colonies of the Ottoman Empire. The League also envisaged a mandate authority over those States to help administer them, to build their own institutions and to enable them to achieve their own independence. Palestine was among the Arab States falling under this principle.

Since 1948, Israel has occupied Arab territories, expelled its indigenous population and established illegal settlements. In 1967, it occupied East Jerusalem, annexed it illegally in 1980 and declared it the eternal capital of Israel. Israel has ignored Security Council resolutions emphasizing the illegality of such procedures, particularly resolution 242 (1967), which stressed the illegality of occupying the lands of others by force, and resolution 478 (1980), in which the Council decided not to recognize what is called the basic statute concerning Jerusalem. Israel has completely flouted the international community by using illegal means to change the natural and demographic features of the city of Al-Quds, thus imposing a fait accompli. Israel has continued to annex the Arab territories that it has occupied by force since 1967 by elaborating a cancerous policy that requires the establishment of illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian and Syrian territories and that encourages extremist Jewish settlers, whom it invites from all parts of the world, to settle illegally in the occupied Arab territories. It then provides them with weapons to terrorize the Arab population and force them to leave, losing the right to their own land.

In order to carry out its colonialist policy Israel practises collective punishment against the Palestinian population. An example of that is Israel's policy of forcing the pumping of the waters of the occupied West Bank to the illegal Israeli settlements, depriving the Palestinian people of their natural right to these waters.

Many resolutions were adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council that have emphasized the illegal nature of Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories. In Security Council resolution 446 (1979), the Council affirmed that Israeli policies and practices that have led to establishing these settlements have no legal status and constitute a serious impediment to bringing about a just, comprehensive and permanent peace in the Middle East.

The Security Council reaffirmed its position in subsequent resolutions, particularly resolution 465 (1980), which determines that policies and practices followed by Israel to have its new immigrant population settle in Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories, which it has occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds, constitute a flagrant breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In February 1999, at its tenth emergency special session, the General Assembly, by an overwhelming majority, adopted resolution ES-10/6, calling for the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

The world today is more convinced than ever before of the essential need to establish a State of Palestine as a fundamental step to bringing about peace in the Middle East. That conviction is reflected in the unprecedented international support received by Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), which affirms the Council's vision of a region in which two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders. In addition to Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Arab peace initiative endorsed by the Beirut Arab Summit has received wide acceptance as a way of reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The way to resolving that conflict became clear after Arab leaders at Beirut unanimously endorsed a fully integrated peace initiative calling for the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, to the lines of 4 June 1967, and withdrawal from the rest of southern Lebanon. That proposal also called for resolving the problem of Palestinian refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III), without resettling them. In addition, the proposal calls for Israel's acceptance of the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State on the territory occupied since 4 June 1967, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Once that

is done, Arab States would consider the Arab-Israeli conflict to be at an end and would establish a peace agreement with Israel, ensuring security for all, and would have normal relations with it.

The implementation of those concepts of peace continues to face Israel's ongoing aggression against the economic, political and human rights of the Palestinian people. Israel is also continuing its expansionist colonialist policies aimed at destroying the Palestinian entity and national identity. Those Israeli practices should cause the international community to do more than just deplore and condemn the situation. The international community should seek to find an effective mechanism to protect the Palestinian people and their rights, end Israel's occupation of Arab territories and ensure the fulfilment of Israel's commitment to implement resolutions of international legality.

The President took the Chair.

In that regard, I would like to remind the Assembly of the call made last week, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, by Ms. Phyllis Bennis on behalf of non-governmental organizations active on the question of Palestine. She appealed to the members of the General Assembly to assume their responsibility to ensure the implementation of United Nations resolutions and of international law in order to protect Palestinians under occupation.

In conclusion, allow me also to remind members that Lebanon also continues to suffer from Israel's violation of its sovereignty and airspace and its daily acts of aggression against its land and water resources. In that regard, we must also recall that Security Council resolution 425 (1978) called upon Israel to withdraw from all Lebanese territory. Everyone knows that full withdrawal must include withdrawal from all Lebanese waters and airspace, as well as the Sheb'a farms area, which Syria, and General Assembly and Security Council documents have established to be Lebanese territory. Those are lands that no country but Lebanon can claim as its own.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada): The crisis in the Middle East grinds tragically on. Nearly every day innocent lives are lost and hope dims. Humanitarian conditions worsen and peace recedes. All of us know that none of the peoples of the region will live in peace until all of them live in peace. We all know also what must be done. Terrorism must end, violence must cease, incitement to hatred must stop and settlement activity. Only then can confidence begin to be rebuilt.

(*spoke in French*)

We all know that the parties, on their own, cannot achieve peace. We all know also that others cannot do it for them. All must work together, supporting the road map now being developed by the Quartet.

For our part, Canada stands ready to assist the parties to achieve the vision we all share of two viable States living side by side in peace and, ultimately, prosperity.

Mr. Al-Awadi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to make clear that Kuwait's position has not changed with respect to its support of Arab and Islamic concerns and to the agenda items on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. Our position has been made clear in the numerous statements we have made during previous debates.

Kuwait firmly condemns all acts of violence and barbaric practices carried out by the Israeli Government against the Palestinian people. We call on the Israeli Government to put an end to its unjustified acts of aggression, its economic siege and its policy of colonialist expansionism, which can lead only to frustration and violence.

In making this statement, I cannot but make particular reference to the situation of Palestinian children and to their feelings of despair given the tragic situation resulting from the Israeli actions. All Israeli practices in this context — the continuing occupation of Arab territories in Palestine and the Syrian Golan; the ongoing threats against Lebanon's sovereignty; and the fierce and bloody campaign being waged against the Palestinian people — are blatant violations of the principles of international law, the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, the Charter of the United Nations, and the principle of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

It is also particularly abhorrent that today Israeli injustices are extending to United Nations civil servants and international humanitarian organizations working in the Palestinian territories. We condemn the murder of Iain John Hook, United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Project Manager, as well as

the acts of aggression perpetrated by the Israeli forces against the warehouses of the World Food Programme which recently took place in Gaza.

The Israeli Government no longer targets only Palestinian civilians but also all those means that help them survive the daily acts of genocide to which they are subjected. Kuwait expresses its full support for the Palestinian people and will participate in every effort to ease the difficult humanitarian situation that has prevailed since September 2000 — since Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the Haram Al-Sharif mosque. We also condemn the repeated Israeli incursions into territories under the control of Palestinian Authority as well as the murder of innocent children.

Kuwait supports the resolutions that have been adopted in this regard and stresses the need to ensure the security of all civilians in the Middle East. We condemn all acts of violence that jeopardize the lives of civilians, particularly of children of whatever religion or nationality.

Kuwait has responded to all appeals based on the principles of international humanitarian law to help the Palestinian people. The Kuwaiti Red Crescent, despite severe difficulties, worked to ensure that such humanitarian assistance was able to get through, despite Israeli attempts to prevent this from happening. My Government has also continued to make contributions to UNRWA.

We have the honour to note that the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society received a letter of thanks and gratitude from the International Federation of the Red Cross for its provision of relief assistance in the West Bank and Gaza. Kuwait calls on the Security Council to fulfil its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and to impose its will on the Israeli Government, with a view to ensuring compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and to protecting Palestinian civilians.

Here we would highlight the fact that the United Nations must play an important role in the process of finding solutions to the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict in all their aspects. This is an ongoing United Nations responsibility in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). We must also continue to work to end this tragic situation through peaceful means, and negotiations must be resumed to find a peaceful solution on all tracks.

In this regard, Kuwait supports the efforts of the Quartet and the participation of the United States, which we hope will continue, alongside that of the European Union and the Russian Federation. If just, lasting and comprehensive peace is to be established in this region, we need first of all to agree that Israel's occupation of Arab territories since 1967 is the crux of the problem, and secondly that Israel should withdraw from the territories occupied since 1967 and should accept the establishment of a Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The principle of land for peace must also be implemented as well as the relevant United Nations resolutions.

We also support the initiative taken by the League of Arab States in Beirut in March, which endorsed the implementation of the principle of land for peace in the region.

Secondly, we support the position of the Secretary-General, who has stated that the solution to the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot be achieved through force and violence, but only through dialogue and peaceful negotiations. The Israeli Government needs to be convinced of this principle.

Kuwait will continue to support the Palestinian people in order that they may finally exercise their right to self-determination and establish an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as stipulated in the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). We call on Israel to withdraw from the Syrian Golan occupied since 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolution 497 (1981). Indeed, the occupation and annexation of the Syrian Golan is a major handicap to the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

Kuwait reiterates the illegality of the occupation of those Syrian territories. We share all the concerns expressed by the Permanent Representative of Syria in the statement he made yesterday from this very rostrum. We call on Israel to resume negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks from the point where they left off and to comply with the commitments it undertook during the negotiations. We also call on Israel to withdraw from all Lebanese territories, in accordance with resolution 425 (1978), to put an end to

its threats against Lebanon and to respect the sovereignty of that country and stop exploiting its natural resources so that it can proceed with its development projects, which we continue to support.

In conclusion, let me say that the Israeli Government needs to remember that security is a requirement for all peoples of the region, not just for the Palestinian people. Security cannot be achieved through campaigns of violence based on hatred of Muslims and Arabs. What we need, in keeping with our customs, religion and culture, is relationships based on peace. We must extend our hand in peace and commend each other, so that others will respond in kind.

However, the Israeli Government offers only violence, occupation, murder and oppression. We urge it to extend the hand of peace, so that the region could finally know the peace that it deserves.

Mr. Al-Malki (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Middle East region is going through a troubled and tense period because of the continued Israeli occupation of Arab territories and the setbacks in all tracks of the peace process, especially the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This situation is the result of Israel's departure from the just principles that have formed the basis of the peace process since it began at the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. It should be noted that the Governments that have taken office in Israel since 1996 have all sought to derail the peace process through the use of brute force against Palestinian civilians, contrary to the spirit of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), other United Nations resolutions and the principle of land for peace. They have pursued a policy of procrastination, terrorism and non-compliance with international instruments and agreements.

My country condemns and denounces all acts of terrorism against innocent civilians, regardless of the motives behind those acts. Events have demonstrated that the use of force against the Palestinian people has given rise to counter-violence, which would end if Israel refrained from committing State terrorism and war crimes and terminated its occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories.

In that context, we call upon Israel to end its siege of the Palestinian Authority, cease the demolition of houses, remove roadblocks in Palestinian villages and towns, lift its siege on Islamic and Christian holy places, freeze settlement activity and enter seriously into negotiations.

Proof that Israel is not serious about ending the occupation is its rejection of the initiative of Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia. The Arab Peace Initiative was unanimously endorsed at the Beirut Arab Summit of last March and widely welcomed by the international community, as it conforms with the rules and principles of international law.

My country believes that the United Nations provides the basic framework for establishing international peace and security and for strengthening respect for international law. Disregarding the United Nations and settling conflicts and disputes outside its framework constitute a flagrant disregard for the credibility of the Organization and its principal organs, particularly the Security Council, whose resolutions must be observed without double standards or selectivity.

In that regard, my country stresses the need to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for the withdrawal of Israel from the territories that it has occupied since June 1967, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, as well as the implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), whose operative paragraph 11 affirms the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland and properties and to live in peace in their homeland. Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) has provided the framework for ending the spiral of violence and instability in the Middle East. My country therefore calls upon the international community, especially the members of the Security Council, to shoulder their responsibilities, to prevail upon the Government of Israel to comply with relevant international resolutions and to respond with sincerity and seriousness to the Arab and international initiatives.

My country supports the Syrian Arab Republic's right to recover the occupied Syrian Arab Golan and calls upon Israel to withdraw to the borders of 4 June 1967, to cease practices violating the human rights of the inhabitants of the occupied Arab territories and to cease its economic exploitation of the land and the population, as well as its policy of systematically encouraging illiteracy and historical and cultural distortion through education. Those policies aim at undermining the Arab nature of the Golan and at

erasing the Arab culture and heritage from the minds of the area's Syrian inhabitants.

My country also calls upon Israel to desist from building settlements and to put an end to the expulsion of inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan from their lands. Here, we express our support for the return of the occupied Sheb'a farms to the Lebanese Republic and for the implementation of resolution 425 (1978), which Israel has ignored for more than 22 years. We also call upon Israel to desist from its attempt to control the water and natural resources of the Lebanese Republic, in accordance with the relevant international instruments and laws.

The Government of Israel has rejected the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, especially Security Council resolution 1405 (2002), which established the fact-finding commission on the Jenin massacre. The current policy of the Israeli Government is based on the principle of violence and State terrorism and the perpetration of the most terrible war crimes in pursuing its settlement and expansionist policies. Israel continues to stockpile weapons of mass destruction in its military arsenals and rejects efforts for a comprehensive and just solution to the question of the Middle East, while enjoying impunity. However, despite all this, it is our hope that a Government will come to office in Israel that will listen to logic and common sense and renounce those practices, making possible the establishment of peace, security and stability in the region and the creation of a better future, which will achieve peace, prosperity and happiness for the people of the region and the entire world in the third millennium.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Every day in the Middle East region, particularly in occupied Palestine, we learn about regrettable tragedies that the Palestinian people are enduring under the yoke of Israeli occupation. A painful tragedy is repeated daily before us, and the occupying Power does not want to understand the reality of that tragedy. Despite the fact that some Israeli citizens have become victims of the spiral of violence, the extremist voice of the Israeli street is mightier than the voice of wisdom and reality and fails to recognize that there is a people that looks forward to freedom and to establishing an independent State on its historic land — the land of Palestine.

We face the very difficult reality of Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan and certain lands in south Lebanon. In view of that reality, the international community must impose sufficient pressure on the Israeli Government to halt the practice of violence, which violates all international laws and norms, to put an end to its occupation of those territories and to withdraw to the boundaries of 4 June 1967. Unless that happens, the spiral of violence and counter-violence in the Middle East will continue, mostly at the expense of the Palestinian people, which has lost its most cherished possession — its land.

We should all put ourselves in the situation in which the Palestinian people are living in order to understand the scope of the tragedy that they are experiencing. In addition to condemning the hateful occupation, we should condemn the systematic demolition of the houses of Palestinians, the elimination of their livelihoods and the wide-scale confiscation of their land.

Like all the peoples of the region, we look forward with hope to achieving a just and lasting peace — a peace that preserves the dignity and the rights of the Palestinian people, who have suffered enough from a hateful occupation. On this occasion, we should like to emphasize the Arab Peace Initiative aimed at halting the spiral of violence, endorsed by the League of Arab States at the Beirut Summit in March 2002, as the basis of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has the question of Palestine at its core. That initiative has been widely accepted at the international level. We should like to reaffirm Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) — in which the Council reaffirmed for the first time its vision of a region in which two States, Israel and Palestine, exist side by side within secure and recognized borders — and our full support for the efforts of the Quartet to establish peace in the region. Because of their international influence, we are fully convinced that the Quartet's four members will be able to play a decisive role in finding a just and final settlement acceptable to all the parties.

We have great hope that the voice of reason and wisdom will prevail on Israeli leaders to choose the path of peace and to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable rights to self-determination and to establish an independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, so that the region and its people will have the opportunity to enjoy stability and to begin a new period

of development and of confidence-building among all the parties.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): For much of the 1990s, the peoples of the Middle East looked to the future with great optimism. For the first time in decades, nations and individuals allowed themselves to dream that the conflict that had raged for so long and had claimed so many innocent lives could be rendered a relic of history. They believed that we were entering an exciting new era in which conflict would yield to cooperation and the opportunities of a brave new world would replace history's bickering over land and resources. Today, much of that optimism and excitement has dissipated. Fear and worry have replaced the hope that once prevailed. We are now in danger of raising a new generation resigned to the reality of endless war.

We know from our history, however, that that need not be. While war and terrorism characterized much of the history of the Middle East in the past century, it is not the only path available to us. There is an alternative path: the path of dialogue and reconciliation, based upon respect for the rights of all States and an unshakeable commitment to non-violence and mutual recognition. It was that commitment that enabled Israel to conclude peace treaties with two of our neighbours, Egypt and Jordan. Those landmark events paved the way for the improvement of our relations with other States in the region and for the beginning of the Oslo peace process, which was intended to inaugurate a historic process of reconciliation with the Palestinian people. They also demonstrated conclusively that only a negotiated settlement can bring peace to the region and opportunity and prosperity to its peoples.

The violence and terrorism of the past two years threaten to reverse that trend and to return us to the path of confrontation. Unfortunately, while States in the region could be working to reduce tensions, some seem intent on exacerbating them and on making a return to a process of negotiations impossible. Such is the effect — if not the deliberate intent — of the policy of the Government of Lebanon, which, while clinging to the discredited and untenable position that Israel is occupying Lebanese lands, continues to support and encourage cross-border acts of aggression, in flagrant defiance of the will of the international community.

It should be recalled that Israel fully withdrew its forces from southern Lebanon in May 2000, in full compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). That fact was confirmed by the Secretary-General, endorsed by the Security Council and repeatedly referred to in subsequent Security Council resolutions, most recently in resolution 1428 (2002). The responsibility now lies with the Government of Lebanon to fulfil its responsibilities under resolution 425 (1978) — namely, the deployment of its armed forces up to the Blue Line so as to reassert its effective authority in southern Lebanon and the restoration of peace and security in the area.

To date, however, the Government of Lebanon has given no indication that it plans to fulfil its responsibilities under international law. Rather than restoring its authority in the south, the Government of Lebanon has yielded the territory to the terrorist organization Hizbullah, which has turned it into one of the world's last bastions of utter lawlessness and a haven for terrorists. The organization has used this territory to train terrorists, provide them with safe haven and, through its global communications network, export its culture of suicidal terrorism to every corner of the globe.

While Hizbullah claims to be acting against Israel only to "liberate" Lebanese territory, recent statements by the organization's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, leave no doubt as to Hizbullah's ultimate intentions. In comments printed in Hizbullah's official magazine, *Al-Intiqad* on 15 November 2002, Nasrallah stated:

> "We view America as an enemy of the [Islamic] nation ... The American Government and the experts in America and Israel as well as the military generals were unable to eliminate the concept of suicide and the weapon of suicide attacks ... We must act in order to spread the concept of martyrdom for the realization of Allah's way as well as the act of suicide among the [Islamic] nation in order to protect our land."

Such comments should come as no surprise from the leader of an organization responsible for such notorious acts of terrorism as the bombing of the Multinational Force headquarters in Beirut in 1983; the hijacking of a TWA jetliner in June 1985; the bombing of the Embassy of Israel in Buenos Aires in 1992; and the bombing of the Jewish Mutual Assistance Association of Argentina (AMIA) Community Center

in the same city in 1994. And yet, despite Hizbullah's lengthy record of terrorist atrocities, Lebanon has taken no steps to confront the organization as is required under resolution 1373 (2001). Nor has Lebanon acted to respect its obligations under resolution 425 (1978) and subsequent resolutions that require it to respect the integrity of the Blue Line and ensure a calm environment in the south. Consequently, Lebanon continues to be a source of tension and instability and a threat to international peace and security.

Lebanon's failure to fulfil its responsibilities is the primary source of insecurity and instability along the Blue Line, but it is not the only source. The Government of Syria is also a major supporter of Hizbullah's terrorist activities. Syria allows Hizbullah to maintain training facilities in Syrian-controlled territory and grants its terrorists safe harbour and logistical support, for example by providing military escort for the transport of Iranian weapons through the Syrian capital of Damascus to Hizbullah's operatives in the field. Without this critical support from the Syrian regime, Hizbullah's operations would be severely limited.

But Syrian support for terrorism goes far beyond support for Hizbullah, and has continued — incredibly — even with that country's election to the Security Council. Groups such as Ahmad Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLPGC), the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) continue to incite and train terrorists and to coordinate and direct operations from their bases in Damascus. Just five days after Syria assumed the Presidency of the Security Council in June 2002, the leader of Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in northern Israel that killed 17 and wounded over 40. Countless other examples could be cited of attacks carried out by Palestinian terrorist operatives who have received training, or have been directed, by individuals enjoying the safe haven provided by the Government of Syria.

Beyond Syria and Lebanon, the third and most significant supporter of Hizbullah is Iran, which has long been the organization's major patron, supplying it not only with funding, weapons and training, but also with the ideological inspiration and Islamic legitimacy necessary to ensure its broad appeal. It is also widely documented that Iran actively supports, finances, arms and trains terrorists sent to attack Israeli civilians by the Palestine Islamic Jihad and Hamas organizations.

Iran maintains a policy of complete and total rejection of Israel's right to exist and has actively pursued the weapons capability necessary to actualize that policy. With the Shihab-3 missile, Iran is pursuing the capability to strike Israeli cities. When it was paraded through the streets of Teheran in September 1998, the inscription on the missile carrier declared: "Israel should be wiped off the map". In light of its hostile intentions, as well as Iran's long association with known terrorist elements, the country's active pursuit of non-conventional-weapon strike capability, including chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, must be a source of tremendous concern to the international community.

Similarly, the Government of Iraq has demonstrated its ill intent towards Israel and other neighbouring States, has provided financial support for terrorism and has a long history of attempts to acquire non-conventional weapons capability, in defiance of Security Council resolutions. Iraq also has a brutal record of aggression. It has not only used weapons of mass destruction, but it has also indicated its willingness to do so again. Iraq must, therefore, continue to be the focus of a concerted international effort aimed at ridding that country of its non-conventional weapons capability. Israel supports the efforts of the Security Council in this regard and hopes those efforts will be brought swiftly to a successful conclusion.

Iraqi disarmament is of particular concern to Israel, which has been a target of Iraqi aggression. In addition to its attacks on Israeli cities during the Gulf War, Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, has actively supported Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israel. Saddam has provided the families of Palestinian terrorists with tens of thousands of dollars each and has already paid out several million dollars of such blood money. Such rewards are sure to perpetuate acts of suicide terrorism and derail efforts to calm tensions and restart the political process. The international community must continue to pressure Iraq in order to ensure its compliance with international law and to ensure that it does not possess the capability to threaten regional security.

It is particularly distressing that the support of Syria, Lebanon, Iran and Iraq for anti-Israel terror has

continued, even as the world has united to combat the common threat of terrorism. In the past year, the world has reawakened to the threat that terrorism poses to free societies all over the world and has resolved to combat this scourge, wherever it may breed.

Last week, terrorists attacked the Paradise Hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, killing 16 people, among them two Israeli brothers, ages 12 and 14. The bombing came only minutes after an attempt to blow up an Israeli passenger jet carrying 271 civilians as it took off from the Mombasa airport. Two shoulder-launched missiles barely missed their target, which averted what would have been a horrific catastrophe. The same day, six Israelis were killed, and more than 40 were wounded, when Palestinian gunmen loyal to Chairman Arafat detonated grenades and indiscriminately fired automatic weapons at people waiting to vote at a polling station in Beit She'an, in the north of Israel.

These three heinous terrorist acts, in addition to other recent terrorist attacks in Moscow, Bali, and Israel, confirm that international efforts to confront terrorism can neither be relaxed nor reduced. Terrorists operate as a network, and support or tolerance of any terrorist organization bolsters and empowers others. For the struggle against terrorism to be successful, the international community must be consistent in its condemnation of such acts and hold accountable all those who engage in or support the murder of innocents.

Israel has been on the front lines of the anti-terror campaign since its very inception. Indeed, in our region terrorists continue to arm themselves, clerics continue to inspire them and certain regimes continue to encourage them, all with the aim of preventing peace and coexistence from taking root in the Middle East. Failure to confront that threat will render impotent all efforts at peace and stability, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere.

The new millennium ushered in an era of tremendous hope and opportunity, but it also introduced us to a world of new dangers. In the Middle East, we are walking the razor's edge between the opportunities of the modern world and the terrorist threat that risks taking us back to the Middle Ages. All States must choose which of those paths they wish to follow — the path leading to cooperation and limitless possibilities, or the path of terrorism leading to pain, bloodshed and misery.

As it has been since its creation in 1948, Israel is committed to the former path. Our hand remains extended in peace. We are committed to negotiating fair and lasting solutions to all outstanding disputes in the region. We urge all our neighbours to join us in making that commitment — to peace, non-violence, coexistence and mutual recognition.

We are confident that if that commitment can be made, and if the necessary actions can be taken to give it substance, we will soon see the triumph of peace and reconciliation take root among all the peoples of the Middle East.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 36. I would like to inform Members that action on draft resolutions A/57/L.44 and A/57/L.45 will be taken after action on the draft resolutions under agenda item 35, entitled "Question of Palestine", has been taken.

Agenda item 35 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Draft resolutions (A/57/L.34, A/57/L.35, A/57/L.36, A/57/L.37)

The President: The General Assembly will now resume its consideration of agenda item 35, entitled "Question of Palestine". Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on this item at its 63rd and 64th plenary meetings, held on 29 November and 2 December.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/57/L.34 to A/57/L.37. We turn first to draft resolution A/57/L.34, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People". I should like to announce that since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/57/L.34: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Guinea, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam,

Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Yugoslavia

The draft resolution was adopted by 109 votes to 4, with 56 abstentions (resolution 57/107).

The President. I now turn to draft resolution A/57/L.35, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat".

I should like to announce that since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/57/L.35: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Guinea, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany,

Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Yugoslavia

The draft resolution was adopted by 108 votes to 4, with 56 abstentions (resolution 57/108).

The President: I turn next to draft resolution A/57/L.36, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat".

I should like to announce that since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/57/L.36: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Guinea, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, United States of America

The draft resolution was adopted by 159 votes to 5 (resolution 57/109).

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.37, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

I should like to announce that since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/57/L.37: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Guinea, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of

Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), United States of America

Abstaining:

Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu

Draft resolution A/57/L.37 was adopted by 160 votes to 4, with 3 abstentions (resolution 57/110).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Price (Canada): Canada supported this resolution because of our firm commitment to finding a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, we believe there is no military solution to this dispute. Violence must end, and negotiations must resume. Both the Palestinians and Israelis continue to suffer, and both must take the necessary steps outlined in this resolution to end this suffering.

Canada reiterates the resolution's emphasis of the importance of the safety and well-being of all civilians in the entire Middle East region, as well as our condemnation of all acts of violence and terror. We particularly condemn suicide attacks that target Israeli civilians, which are an affront to us all.

Canada does not consider any reference in operative paragraph 5 to represent a constraint on Israel's legitimate right to defend itself and to protect its citizens. The exercise of that right, however, must always be undertaken in accordance with international humanitarian law, particularly as it relates to the responsibilities of an occupying Power and the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country, Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to explain the vote by these countries on the draft resolutions entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People" and "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat".

During the last year, the Middle East has again been struck by great tragedy and violence resulting, inter alia, in an alarmingly high number of civilian casualties. The European Union strongly condemns the recent acts of terror and violence, which only serve to derail the process towards reconciliation. We are convinced that the framework of the peace process represents the only reasonable hope for ending a conflict which has already caused far too much suffering of the people involved. The European Union remains committed to working within the Quartet on a concrete, three-phased road map outlining the necessary steps towards a final Israeli-Palestinian settlement. Israelis and Palestinians must address the core issues that divide them, through sustained negotiations. Thus we continue to call on Israelis and

Palestinians to work actively with the Quartet and other parties to reach this objective, thereby realizing the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders.

The European Union regrets the fact that the terms of reference of these two United Nations bodies dealing with the question of Palestine do not sufficiently reflect the spirit of the peace process. For that reason, we have, as in the past, abstained on these two resolutions.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the vote.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 35.

Agenda item 36 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Draft resolutions A/57/L.44 and A/57/L.45

The President: The General Assembly will now revert to agenda item 36 to take action on draft resolutions A/57/L.44 and A/57/L.45. We first turn to draft resolution A/57/L.44, entitled "Jerusalem".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Costa Rica, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

Draft resolution A/57/L.44 was adopted by 154 votes to 5, with 6 abstentions (resolution 57/111).

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.45 entitled "The Syrian Golan".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran

(Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Yugoslavia

Draft resolution A/57/L.45 was adopted by 109 votes to 4, with 57 abstentions (resolution 57/112).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Erdmann (United States of America): This year's resolution on Jerusalem seeks to impose specific terms on the issue of Jerusalem, which Israelis and Palestinians have agreed will be addressed in their final-status negotiations. The United States objects to this intrusion by the Assembly into the negotiations. Our position continues to be that Jerusalem is one of the final-status issues to be negotiated directly by the parties and the Quartet and others in the international community are working with the parties towards a resumption of political dialogue to make such negotiations possible.

The United States fully supports the internationally recognized right of religious freedom for all people.

Mr. Estremé (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine Republic has voted in favour of draft resolution A/57/L.45 on the Syrian Golan because we believe that the essential aspect of the matter relates to the lawfulness of acquisition of territory by force. Article 2, section 4, of the United Nations Charter prohibits the use or threat of the use of force against the territorial integrity of a State. This is an imperative rule of international law.

At the same time, I wish to clarify the position of the Argentine delegation concerning operative paragraph 6 of the draft resolution. The vote of my country does not necessarily prejudge our position with regard to the reference to the line of 4 June 1967 contained in that paragraph.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Turkey — as well as the EFTA country of the European Economic Area Iceland align themselves with this statement.

Allow me to explain the vote by these countries on the draft resolution just adopted entitled "The Syrian Golan".

The European Union is deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of the situation in the Middle East. The current spiral of violence must cease. There can be no military solution to the Middle East conflict. A just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the situation in the Middle East, including the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), the Madrid terms of reference, in particular the

principle of land for peace, and the implementation of all existing agreements between the parties. We will continue to work relentlessly with the regional parties and within the Middle East Quartet towards that goal.

The European Union also wishes to point out that a final peace settlement will not be complete without taking account of the Israel-Syria and Israel-Lebanon aspects. Negotiations should resume as soon as possible with the aim of reaching an agreement. The European Union welcomes in this regard the Arab peace initiative endorsed at the Arab League Summit in Beirut, which offers the prospects of a comprehensive peace settlement for the whole Middle East region.

We believe that the resolution on the Syrian Golan contains geographical references which could undermine the process of bilateral negotiations. For that reason, as in previous years, the European Union abstained in the vote.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the vote. The Observer of Palestine asked to make a statement after the adoption.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine): We are indeed very pleased with the results of the vote, which reflect overwhelming support for the five resolutions just adopted. We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to all Member States who voted in favour of those resolutions. Our thanks, of course, go to the Chairman, members and the observers of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in particular Ambassador Papa Louis Fall, the Permanent Representative of Senegal. The Committee has indeed made valuable efforts to preserve the question of Palestine and upholding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as well as affirming the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards that question until it is effectively solved in all its aspects.

The resolutions just adopted are indeed important ones, especially those of a political nature: the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, as well as the resolution on Jerusalem.

We appreciate the unanimous support of the first resolution given by the European Union and we look forward to seeing positives votes in favour of the resolution on the Committee of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights next year.

At the same time, we were shocked to see the negative United States vote on the draft resolution on Jerusalem. Needless to say, that vote represents an important negative change in the voting pattern of that delegation. We believe that such a vote represents a slap in the face of all Arabs and Muslim and Christian believers who would want to see a different situation in that holy city. We also believe that vote undermines efforts to reach a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, and in particular of the issue of Jerusalem. Let me also say that the changes made in the draft resolution were minimal and that they were made very cautiously. The delegation of the United States did not attempt to negotiate the text, or even to indicate the difficulties it may have had with the text as it was presented.

Allow me also to make a few comments about the claim made regarding the resolutions just adopted, namely, that they prejudge the outcome of the peace process. We do not believe those resolutions prejudge the outcome any more than international humanitarian law would prejudge the outcome of any dispute anywhere and at any time. Those resolutions merely reiterate principles of international law and the minimum requirements of justice and equity. The parties can, and will, negotiate the details of a settlement, but without legitimizing illegal Israeli designs and while being in compliance with the agreed basis for a settlement.

Attempts to neutralize the United Nations are, unfortunately, aimed at allowing Israel to impose as facts the results of its continuous violations of international law and of relevant Security Council and other United Nations resolutions. It is also an attempt to leave the Palestinian people at the mercy of the imbalance of power on the ground and to deprive them of the benefit of any existing rules and laws. Let me therefore reiterate the importance of those resolutions, as well as the positive position taken by the overwhelming majority of Member States to uphold international law and to act in line with the permanent responsibility of the United Nations.

Two days ago, we listened very carefully to the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Israel in the Assembly during the debate on the question of Palestine. We felt optimistic indeed that there was a voice of reason and moderation assuring the international community that a peaceful settlement was in fact possible. Unfortunately, our optimism did

not last. Only hours after that, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Israeli Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu both reprimanded that representative, and clearly stated that what he said did not reflect the position of the Government and that the Israeli Government had not accepted the vision of a two-State solution.

We are therefore once more left with a clear manifestation of the crux of the problem and the real position of this Israeli Government and of people like Mr. Sharon and Mr. Netanyahu, who are supported by military leaders implicated in war crimes, such as General Shaul Moufaz and General Moshe Yaalon. We nevertheless will remain faithful to the peace process. We are not going to lose hope. We believe that, with the help of the international community and persistent positions and messages such as the message sent today by the General Assembly, the parties will be able to overcome obstacles and will indeed soon reach a final settlement establishing lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to extend its heartfelt gratitude to all the delegations that voted in favour of the resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan. The General Assembly's adoption of that resolution means a great deal to our people and to all who believe in the essential need to end occupation wherever it exists. The resolution has once again reaffirmed a clear and succinct message that leaves no doubt that occupation, the building of settlements and the denial of people's rights should all be rejected.

The General Assembly has sent a clear message about the inadmissibility of the acquisition of the territory of others by force and about the fact that this matter is of great interest to every nation of the world that wants to bring occupation to an end. In that resolution the Assembly has also expressed its serious concern with regard to Israel's failure to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan, which has now been under occupation for more than 32 years. The Assembly is sending a message to Israel that it should understand that its decision to extend its jurisdiction, laws and administration to the occupied Syrian Golan is null and void and has no legal force whatever. In addition, the Assembly has also decided that Israel's continued occupation and annexation of the Syrian Golan constitutes a serious obstacle to establishing a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

The international community's voice should be heard, and the occupying Power must heed that voice. A solution will come about only through Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories and its restoration of the rights of peoples, particularly those of Palestinians and of Syrian citizens forcibly expelled from their lands, villages and towns. Peace and security are interlinked; security cannot be established in the absence of peace.

I would like to reiterate Syria's gratitude to all delegations that expressed their solidarity with Syria by voting in favour of the resolution. I would also like to emphasize to all States Members of the United Nations that Syria will continue to seek a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

The President: A number of delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation, like others, has grown accustomed to listening to statements by the representative of Israel that assert everything but the truth. The representative of Israel's statement was full of lies, misinformation and accusations hurled in all directions — except at Israel. We would like to make it clear to States Members of the General Assembly is that the Israeli occupation of Arab territories is the main cause of all the tragedies experienced by the region. What the representative of Israel failed to say in his statement is that it was Israel that brought terrorism to the Middle East — perpetrating terrorist acts against millions of Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and citizens of other Arab countries.

It is well known that Israel has carried out some of the most horrific terrorist acts, in the form of assassinations and extrajudicial executions, in some of the world's capitals. My colleagues from these capitals know about the terrorist acts perpetrated by Israel in their countries. The tears that Israel sheds for the victims of terrorism in many parts of the world are nothing more than crocodile tears. Israel is trying to divert attention from its crimes, which include assassinations and extrajudicial executions, the demolition of houses, the use of aircraft and tanks to bomb innocent civilians and the displacement of

innocent civilians, as well as other horrific forms of oppression, killing and terrorism.

The Israeli statement referred to Hizbullah. We know why Israel hates Hizbullah: it is the power that has been able to put an end to its occupation of southern Lebanon after Israel's refusal to implement United Nations resolutions, including resolution 425 (1978), for more than 20 years. As is well known, Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon started in 1982.

As for what the representative of Israel said concerning Syria's support for a number of Palestinian factions, we would like to reaffirm before the Assembly that those Palestinians who are residing in Syria are actually victims of Israeli aggression and terrorism. The more than half a million Palestinians displaced since 1948 who reside in Syria have not to date been allowed to even dream of returning to their homeland. Who is responsible for that? Israel is the main party responsible.

I would like to stress that Palestinian offices in Syria are nothing more than public information offices. I believe that anyone can establish a public information office that reflects the aspirations of the people to return to their country and to exercise their human rights. The claim that they undertake terrorist operations in the occupied Palestinian territories is false and has no basis in reality. The fact is that people would have to be on their land to be able to undertake such acts. Those Palestinians who are scattered all over the world cannot plan to undertake operations against Israel, in particular if they are outside the occupied territories in which such operations are undertaken.

Israel is always trying to blame others to justify its criminal acts and its violation of international instruments and agreements, particularly the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilians in Time of War.

Syria has clarified more than once that the Palestinian presence in Syria is temporary and will continue only until conditions are right for the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homeland and their property, as they have the legitimate right to establish their own independent country on their national soil.

Putting an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, halting the confiscation of land and the demolition of houses, putting an end to the uprooting of trees and the killing of children, women and the elderly and freezing the construction of racist settlements, together with a commitment to international legally binding resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace, are the only way to safeguard peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Diab (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Israeli representative alleged that his Government implemented Security Council resolution 425 (1978) in order to comply with international law. Everyone knows that Israel, which continued to occupy southern Lebanon for 22 years, in flagrant defiance of that resolution, would not have withdrawn from southern Lebanon but for the valiant Lebanese resistance, which forced it to withdraw, and which enjoyed the support of the Government and the people of Lebanon.

The Lebanese resistance against Israel would not have developed had it not been for Israel's rejection of resolution 425 (1978) for the 22 years of its occupation of southern Lebanon.

We would also like to remind the representative of Israel that his Government is still in breach of resolution 425 (1978) as a result of the daily violation by the Israeli occupation forces of Lebanon's sovereignty by air, land and sea. The Secretary-General considered those breaches as acts of provocation that have become a routine phenomenon.

In any event, the Security Council still considers Israel to be the only occupying Power in the world. Israel continues to occupy Arab territories, including the Lebanese Sheb'a farms. This undermines stability and security in the region. It is a strange irony for the representative of Israel to claim that Lebanon's demand for its own territories undermines peace and security in the region. Are the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions — which have been referred to by one speaker after another over the past few days — and the resolutions that have been adopted today by an overwhelming majority insufficient to make the Israeli representative understand that occupation is undermining peace and security throughout the world?

With regard to the demand for an end to occupation: that is legitimate, as guaranteed by international laws and instruments, and States have the right to make such a demand.

I should like to correct the Israeli representative's personal interpretation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), because the Council never mentioned Hizbullah in that resolution. The Government of Lebanon has cooperated with the Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee; it has sent its periodic reports and has been consistently commended for its cooperation by the Committee's Chairman. In its response to the Counter-Terrorism Committee, Lebanon defined its position with regard to the need to differentiate between resistance and the terrorism that Israel carries out through its army and its armed settlers against the Palestinian people.

Concerning the accusations that the Israeli representative levelled against the Lebanese Hizbullah, they spring from Israel's hatred of the Lebanese resistance, which, by its 22-year struggle against occupation, forced the Israeli army to withdraw from Lebanese territories. The Israeli representative cannot understand how a small resistance group, because of its belief in its land and in its cause, managed to defeat the fourth most powerful army in the world and to force that army out of its sacred land. He is trying to distort the valiant and legitimate image of the Lebanese resistance, which constitutes a milestone in the history of liberation from occupation.

We wish that the Israeli representative, instead of focusing most of the statement that he made before the Assembly today on false allegations against the Lebanese resistance and Hizbullah, had responded to the General Assembly resolutions calling on Israel to take specific measures to put an end to its occupation and to its illegitimate settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories.

Mr. Hamzehei (Islamic Republic of Iran): The unsubstantiated assertions made today by the representative of Israel against my country are meant to divert attention from the brutality, atrocities and violations carried out against the Palestinian people. It is astonishing that a regime with a dark record of developing, producing and stockpiling many kinds of inhuman weapons of mass destruction ventures to accuse a country that is among those in the Middle East that have joined the most basic international instruments in effect in the field of disarmament. Despite numerous calls from the international community, Israel consistently refuses to join those instruments and continues its clandestine programme to develop and produce several kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

Israel remains the only non-party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East, and its record is no better in other fields of disarmament, particularly in the biological and chemical areas. And it is alarming that its nuclear programme and its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities continue to threaten regional and global peace and security.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): The representative of Syria would like us to believe that Israel is the source of terror in the Middle East and that, in fact, Syria is a leading force against terror. That Syria should attempt to divert attention from its well-known record of support for terrorism is not altogether surprising. Syria harbours, supports and encourages some of the most vicious terrorist organizations in the world, many of which have chosen, for that reason, to make their home quite comfortably in Damascus. I should like to mention in particular the Commander of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Ramadan Shallah, who does not run a public information office, but an office responsible for public destruction. Syria has even employed terrorist tactics against its own citizens, as it did in the hideous terrorist massacre committed by the Syrian regime in the city of Hama in 1982, in which 30,000 civilians were butchered, after which the neighbourhood was replaced by a parking lot.

As for Lebanon — whose territory continues to serve as a base for terrorist operations against Israel — its consistent refusal to prevent its territory from being used as a springboard for terrorist attacks against my country is the primary source of instability along the Blue Line. The Secretary-General has repeatedly drawn attention to that fact. Any attempt to accuse Israel of cross-border aggression is a thinly veiled attempt to divert attention from Lebanon's consistent failure to comply with the will of the international community.

With regard to the statements made by the representative of Iran, here we have yet another example of a State widely recognized as one of the world's leading sponsors of terrorism seeking to shift attention to so-called Israeli aggression. Iran is a primary supporter of Hizbullah terrorist operations and has had a hand in countless terrorist operations directed against Israelis and other nationals over the years in Israel and abroad.

I am confident that, for most representatives, the question of who is a terrorist is not a difficult one to answer. Perhaps, when the day comes when the regimes that have spoken here today can look at themselves in the mirror and see their true character, we will be able to overcome the major threat to peace and security in the new millennium and move forward to a future of peace and coexistence for the benefit of all the peoples of the region.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I regret to have to take the floor once again. However, the falsehoods contained in the Israeli statement prompt us to clarify matters. It is well known that a terrorist is one who commits aggression against the rights of others and violates the sanctity of another country's land and people.

Is there anything worse than a terrorist who occupies another people's land and who kills a people — a people that seeks only to live in peace and security? Throughout the years, Israel has perpetrated scores — even hundreds — of terrorist acts in numerous Arab countries and numerous European capitals. The truth is that Israel has occupied our Arab territories for more than 32 years. Can there be any terrorism worse than that?

My second question relates to what the Israeli representative called the offices of some Palestinian organizations in Damascus. We say that these offices do indeed exist. But why do they exist? For instance, there are no offices for Omanis in Syria, nor are there offices for Moroccan Arabs in Syria. Then why do these offices exist? They are for people who have been repressed, oppressed, tortured and targeted by terrorism all over the world.

The Israeli representative referred to the mirror into which each of us must look. When I look into the mirror, I see Syria, an example of commitment to the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region. I see a Syria that does not commit aggression against others or occupy their land. I see a Syria that aspires to the establishment of justice in international relations. Most of all, I see a Syria that demonstrates unremitting cooperation in the fight against international terrorism. We have expressed this fact in the Security Council at all the meetings convened during our membership — and we are proud to have attained that membership, thanks to the nearly unanimous support of the international community, and through bilateral cooperation with any State wishing to cooperate with Syria in that regard.

But what does Israel see when it looks in the mirror — especially the one reflecting the new millennium? It sees occupation, murder, the destruction of houses and extrajudicial killings. That is what 99 per cent of the speakers referred to in addressing this Assembly. Is it not sufficient for Israel to know its practices and the crimes it has committed? Is it not enough to recall that Israel has been unscrupulously killing United Nations staff members, beginning with the killing of Count Bernadotte and ending with the killing of an international civil servant who was left to bleed to death? This is the Israel that should gaze into the mirror, consider its practices, its acts of murder and the crimes that it has committed.

In spite of everything that has been said, I would like to reiterate that Syria is fully committed to the establishment of a comprehensive and just peace in the region — a peace leading to the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, a complete Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and full withdrawal to the line of 4 June 1967, which the Assembly has just endorsed as the approach that must guide all States committed to the United Nations Charter, international legitimacy and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): I deeply regret the tenor of the last intervention of the Syrian representative, which is inappropriate for this Assembly. What we have seen here today is the familiar, yet reprehensible, tactic of blaming the victim rather than the perpetrator. My Syrian colleague has subverted morality by directing his accusations not towards those who engage in wholesale terrorism but rather towards those who are forced to defend themselves against it.

Although we truly wish to achieve a just, comprehensive and durable peace with our neighbours to the north, we have no illusions regarding the true character of the Syrian Government. I, like my Syrian colleague, could also use undiplomatic language. I could remind the members of this Assembly that Syria is a dictatorship; Syria is a police State; Syria is a cultivator and trafficker of narcotics; Syria is the military occupier of the territory of a neighbouring State; Syria has transferred millions of its citizens into that neighbouring State, displacing the indigenous population and usurping its economy; Syria is a State

that sponsors terrorism; Syria harbours in its capital terrorist organizations that actively and violently oppose the peace process in our region, butchering Israeli children in suicide bombings. I could say that Syria brutally murders entire neighbourhoods, tens of thousands of its own citizens, in order to silence political dissent. But I chose not to do so.

I will say, however, that any statement voiced by the delegation of Syria should be considered in the light of those facts, which are known by all, but which are diplomatically usually left unmentioned. It would suffice to say, however, that any Syrian interpretation of the meaning of the word terrorism is inherently suspect. As a matter of fact, when a regime such as that in Syria denigrates any other State for not adopting its definition of terrorism, I would interpret that as a compliment. I would, therefore, like to thank the representative of Syria for his comments, because, coming from him, those unrestrained attacks reassure me that Israel is indeed a nation which respects peace, justice and human dignity.

Mr. Diab (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of Israel claims that he speaks diplomatically. Those who speak diplomatically should also act diplomatically, by implementing the resolutions of the General Assembly and other resolutions of international legality. Quite simply, I would like to join the majority of members who today voted in favour of the resolutions on the situation in the Middle East. We hope that the representative of Israel will realize that the occupation of the territories of others is the source of tragedy and instability. We have not adopted any resolutions today against Syria or Lebanon. The resolutions that we have adopted today are resolutions against Israel, and they have been adopted by an overwhelming majority of the Assembly. Perhaps the representative of Israel will learn from this.

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 36.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.